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JAMES VILA BLAKE AS POET

BEING A BRIEF APPRECIATION OF HIS WORK WITH REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS FROM HIS VARIOUS BOOKS OF VERSE

BY

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JAMES VILA BLAKE AS POET.

Sanity and breadth of philosophy is as fundamental to the highest plane of poetry as to that of prose. It will be found to be as fundamental to any art at its highest expression. Philosophy, wedded to Life, is the centrality of power which pours its light through Life's many-faced reflectors, the arts. Its quality, therefore, must determine largely the plane of individual achievement in art. It is true that the *media* of the reflection must be *Art*. The acme of beauty and truth is found where the purest light of Philosophy inwrought with Life flows through the finest art medium. Hence our first concern with any artist is with the quality of his thought.

James Vila Blake, poet, preacher, theologian, litterateur, is a master-mind in sweep of prophetic vision, in vital and forceful grasp of the large elementals of thought, and in simple, sweet, clear sanity of co-ordination of perceptions. Founding upon a basis purely natural and rational in its best sense, he has become endowed with a lucid, perfectly rounded philosophy and poise of thought which has nothing to fear from, but is companionable to, the developments of scientific law. The effect of this philosophy upon his literary work, whether in prose or poetry, is felt there like under-

pinnings of granite pillars. In the ultimate consideration of Mr. Blake as a poet a study of his full literary work is perhaps a legitimate exaction, by the same reasoning that we may hold Life to be requisite for complete interpretation of a sunset, or recognize any of the countless necessary dependencies of interwoven natural phenomena. Of his published works a list is given below.* To this must be added much uncollected work in prose and verse. In "An Anchor of the Soul" the leading tenets of his religious thought are fully, clearly and logically presented. The "Essays" and "Sermons" show the quality and range of his co-ordination of values. "Saint Solifer" and "More than Kin" are creations of a quaint and tender romantic fancy.

As to note agreement with universalities imports a finer dignity than to mark even wholly admirable dissonance with temporalities, in this critique of Mr. Blake as a poet a purely expository mode of consideration will be followed. Yet to point the difference from the prevailing fashion in verse may be helpful to a swifter comprehension of his individuality. Mr. Blake's work stands in strongly marked contrast to the literary vogue of today; (and if the literary

*Manual Training in Education, 1886.
Essays, 1887.
Poems, 1887.
Legends from Story-Land, 1888.
A Grateful Spirit; and Other Sermons, 1890.
Happiness from Thoughts; and Other Sermons, 1891.
St. Solifer, with Other Worthies and Unworthies, 1891.
Natural Religion, in Sermons, 1892.
More than Kin, 1893.
An Anchor of the Soul: A study of the nature of faith, 1894.
Sonnets, 1898.
Songs, 1902.
Discoveries, 1904.
The Months, 1907.

supply and public taste may not be included together in the term, the latter must answer to it). Wordsworth did not differ more from his contemporaries than does Mr. Blake from the accepted writers of today. Two palpable features of present-day verse may be characterized as "lusciousness," and a lack of simple responsible sincerity. As regards the first, by contrast Mr. Blake appears over-terse and clear-cut. His flavor is that of an apple as against the cloying sweetness of a persimmon. His difference from the vogue is equally marked as regards the other charge. With a pivot in a philosophy that is large, rounded, sane, ample, his work is carved from responsibility, and his "firm and cheerful tone" is invariably buoyant and absolutely sincere. Each least song-burst has its *raison d'être,* and holds a responsible relation to the findings of his philosophy. Moods and their dalliance are notably lacking, vanishing in the crucible of a mind adjusted to large and happy issues. Of "whimpering poets," *et id omne genus,* he says, "Broods I'd hem like bats in rosy fogs, nor seeing nor seen." *v.* Sonnet, p. 97. It has been charged that his work is singularly lacking in a reflection of the passionate despairs, fears, failures, of a struggling soul. Reading deeply enough one may discern the answer in the quiet bosom of the still waters of his tenets, for therein is seen the cure of fear and despair. *Sorrow* has its natural place in his feeling and expression, not as the fine frenzy of a mood, but as the reflection of a sanely sympathetic nature.

In considering the poetry of Mr. Blake analytically, we

may direct our attention first to its substance or matter, then to its form or manner. It is work that is characterized by a marked individuality. One critic has said of it, with partial insight, "Mr. Blake has made an island for himself, and the result is something very strange and very beautiful." If such work mean indeed an island, it is at least one which Withers, Herbert, Vaughn, even such unlike singers as Longfellow, Bryant, and Emerson, and all simply-sincere poet-souls would feel to be *not* strange and unfamiliar. But it is work from no model. In style Mr. Blake has been swayed away by no one and he has copied no one. *Echoes* of other poets there are of course,—that is as inevitable to any reader and lover of poets as are sound-echoes to hill-sides—and it is here we detect Mr. Blake's special love for the older poets. His own individuality is shaped by the cast of his thought and by his artistic taste. The mold of thought is not of the past, though with large tenderness for and due valuation of the past; it is not of the present, though with a sympathetic understanding of the present in its valid thought-simplicities in religion, in politics, in trade, in sociology; it is not a forecast of the idealities of the future merely, though it is indeed strongly prophetic and consonant with the future. It is not of an age, but tents on the wide plains under the constant stars of time. Therefore his work contains few traces of the ephemeral in choice or development of theme. A new truth or an old truth may have equal value to him, but for both the line of vision is always his own, freshly adjusted and far re-

moved from any shade of triteness. The remarkable scope and variety of the seed-thoughts in his verse is one of the most strongly marked traits of his work. In the 150 Sonnets of his book of "Sonnets" are nearly double the number of distinct thoughts, *i. e.,* separate independent ideas apart from mere images or figures or fancies, to be found in Shakespeare's 154 Sonnets. His artistic taste is toward the tenderly reverential, but logical, clearly-cut and sanely simple in poetic utterance. The remarkable conciseness of his style does not preclude a surprising fullness and richness of imagery, a richness that makes no demands on artificial aids for its enhancement. Often a single verse will startle by its sudden galaxy of lights. His exactions upon the thought of his reader together with his concise style are opposed to an "easy" reading, and usually accord him a slowly acquired but steadily augmenting valuation. It may be questioned whether his extremely compressed and compact expression does not result sometimes in a certain clarity of outline that lacks atmospheric toning. Yet the clear dry view is a legitimate nature-effect, and to a lover of that kind of sight the blue rondure of the whole poetic nature is ever present. Questions of "poetic mist" or of "the seer seeing further than he thinks; the singer singing more than he knows,"* etc., etc., have their delusions and their snares for poet and poet-lover. The unresolved, lost-in-a-fog type of poetry has no more place with Mr. Blake than has the "luscious," or the merely ornate.

*See Skipsey's "Poems of William Blake."

A criticism in detail of the form in Mr. Blake's poetry is not in the province of this article, the aim of which is to be, if happily it may, merely a guide or aid to the swifter perception of the leading characteristics of his work. But it is difficult to set limits to the consideration here. With Mr. Blake poetic form has been a passionate study, and pondered deeply both in its principles and in its practice by poets. He is wont to say that *in literature it is the thought that makes anything worthy to live and the form that makes it able to live.* Poetic lawlessness of all sorts, from "free song" to "barbaric yawp," commands little respect from him. Yet within the bounds of form he might be termed a radical, for law and liberty are equally dear to him. To a deep reverence for well-founded law and for poetic traditions he adds a courageous spirit for resourceful and careful development. In verbal choice, in freedom of style, and in constructive genius his dictum is similar to Lowell's "be bold, and again be bold, but not too bold." Balance, proportion, and integrity of construction have a great and special charm for him, and he holds they are determined with certainty by the nature of the thought. His own range in form is through the Ode, Hymn, Lyric, Sonnet, Blank verse, Spencerian stanza, Ballad, Rondel, and minor forms, including two charming bits of his own invention, the "Cameo" and the "Lectel," for examples of which see pp. 72-75 and pp. 68-70.

The selections taken as a whole will be found to be an excellent comment on his wide variety of stanzaic form.

As a prosodist Mr. Blake accepts the metrical laws as prophetically indicated by Sidney Lanier in his "Science of English Verse." It is probable that no other living poet is so well qualified to take up the exposition of those laws where Lanier left it. It may be well to state here that Mr. Blake holds that the figuration of the typical measure of the verse is limited only by the possibilities of the reading voice, and that unskillful reading does not disqualify a verse that *can* be read smoothly in accordance with the metrical intention. His book of "Songs" contains illuminating notes on this subject.

In both style and diction his work has been likened variously and vaguely to the Elizabethan writers, to Herbert, More, Cowley. In point of fact he resembles them in nothing save a direct sincerity of purpose and in a love for pure and noble English word-forms too rarely found in current writing. Attention is asked to the quality, range and flexibility of the splendid diction of the Sonnets. His melody of verse is intrinsic. To a fine and careful ear for "sweet vocables, fine-voiced harmonies" he adds a just taste for the relativity of thought and song values. He says that a rhythm or theme of melody may precede in time and take unto itself a mate in thought, but he insists that the mating thought be an adequate one. If he admits as legitimate such verbal melody unrelated to the thought as is found in Swinburne, at least he does not practice it. In his lyrics especially the harmonious adaptation of sound and movement to the sense should be noted. A line by line study

reveals his quick sensibility to the niceties of consonantal and vowel agreements. An instance is seen in his discountenance of an assimilating vowel sound between the different rhyme-sets of the Sonnet; *e. g.* "ē" and "ō" rhymes are preferred to "ē" and "ī" rhymes, "ā" and "ī" to "ā" and "ĕ," etc. He holds that in the English Sonnet a marked contrast between the rhyme-sets of the three quatrains gives a strength and beauty of sound-color. Imperfect rhymes, commended by Mrs. Browning, utterly condemned by Lanier, abounding in Pope, and frequent in most of the poets, seldom, practically never, are found in Mr. Blake's verse. Especially does he bar imperfections in rhyme-consonantals. Never, for example, does he rhyme *s* with *z* as in *this* and *his,* a usage very common in the poets. Of identical rhyme, for which he has a fondness, he makes facile and not infrequent use. A sensitive ear alert for line coloring leads him to an extremity of structural care. Yet, withal, Mr. Blake is no purist, and to the much suffering "exigencies of verse" he admits a duly restricted place.

The marked control of phrase and of general structure to be found in his poems may be pointed best by a few examples. In the English Sonnet, p. 88, note the correspondence in phrasing of the three quatrains. In the Italian Sonnet, p. 42, note the uniformity of the advancing phrasing of the two quatrains. In the Song, p. 57, note how "Light" in each alternate line retreats a step toward final complete disappearance. The structural control shown in

these examples might be called extreme, yet they have no unpleasantly obtrusive effect and do reveal themselves in fact only to study. Examples of various other kinds of structural effect might be given, such as the contrast of force and smoothness gained by the alternating lines of the third quatrain of the English Sonnet, p. 37, and the general effect of the run-over lines of the Miltonic form as applied to the English Sonnet, p. 40; but such a citation is very partial at best, and only a careful study of Mr. Blake's complete verse can lead to any adequate estimate of his power and practice of internal structural control in verse.

The advance in poetic art from the "Poems" to the "Sonnets" and later work is very marked. The earlier work has the Spring's expectancy of the tilled fields, and always is noble in thought and pure in style, but the later gain in richness of diction, in poetic amplitude, and in control of form is very great. "John Atheling," a noble poem, shows the earlier work in its clarity, its elevation, and its promise. The Sonnet, p. 91, is a flower of perfected genius.

Our ultimate estimate of a poet must concern itself with the totality of his song. In Mr. Blake's poetry that totality is at least a constancy of clear songs of hope, cheer, faith, brotherhood, love of man, faith in men, sung with pure ideals of the poetic art. It is reflection in song of a vision wherein life seen clearly and seen whole comprehends the all-pervasiveness of faith and piety. A claim of flawlessness even within his own kind or domain of poetic work were short and poor sight. What poet of any marked wide-

ness of range shows not lapses from his accredited taste? Mr. Blake has, too, the faults of his virtues. Constant luminous clarity of idea is an offense to a lover of the humid or mystical, continued simplicity becomes a sufferance to a taste craving profuse ornament, conciseness carves a certain severity of grace; but nobility of thought, force, range, dignity, tenderness, originality, no student of Mr. Blake's poetry will deny.

For touches of his unique and tender humor read the Sonnets, p. 90, p. 91, p. 97. For glimpses of his quiet tenderness read the Sonnets, p. 41, p. 89, and the Songs, p. 46, p. 64.

What the place and rank of James Vila Blake is in poetic literature may be a matter of greater or less interest to classifiers; but there is a more vital issue. For those who hold that poetry, "this heart-ravishing *knowledge,*" as Philip Sidney calls it, is a responsible reporter of life and truth, coming "that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly," Mr. Blake's work must have an appeal direct, deep, lasting; and this, crowned or uncrowned by fame, is of the essence of immortality.

It is but fair to state that Mr. Blake has had no part in the issuance of this pamphlet of Selections from his verse save that with difficulty his consent was gained not to discountenance its friendly purpose. The foregoing letter of comment will reach his eye first from the printed page, and it is hoped that the sincerity of its intent may retrieve for him any gaucheries of an inhabile and unaided pen. Having

enjoyed a close literary acquaintance with Mr. Blake for some twelve years, with exceptional opportunities for a careful study of his work, I have now undertaken to ask this special consideration of his work, being impelled thereto by the knowledge that from its marked individuality Mr. Blake's work must obtain its recognition in a place apart from the markets of current verse. If in my manner of presentation of Mr. Blake's verse I have failed to touch the springs of interest I ask that his work receive its full independence of consideration apart from that failure. Deeming an ample and illustrative selection of the poems the best possible comment on the range and quality of Mr. Blake's work, I have given main place to the cullings from his verse, and I trust my extracts from his five books of poetry will be found to be an adequate and representative one.

THE SELECTIONS

PROEM

O world, if thou must ask
Sweet melodies of sound,
I am not given the holy task
To sing for thee. But round
    Thou turnest silently
To make the nights and days,
Inlaid with starry praise.
And round thou goest silently
    To roll along
    The seasons' song.
What if my verse as silently
    Its way may go,
Commingling with thy meaning, blent
With nights and days and seasons! O,
So thus my song and earth agree,—
    I am content.

—*From "Poems."*

EPODOS

Awaiting a birth,
For the light athirst,
The seed in its shell
Is sown in the earth
With the fire of the dew,
Till it stir, till it swell,
Till it break, till it burst
Into view.

And song is pent
In verse, till blent
With the heat, with the tears,
With the fires and the fears,
With the joy, with the pain
Of a heart, and lain
In that sacred earth
Till it stir, till it spring,
Till it break, till it wing
Into birth.

The song—it will stay,
Though seed-coat of verse
Dissolve and disperse,—
It will bide, it will stay,
It will grow alway,
Where first it did start,—
In a heart.

—*From "Poems."*

JOHN ATHELING

I.

JOHN ATHELING—I wager thou know'st him not,
With all thy knowledge: little more know I.
'Twas singing in the street that he was found,
Like the great Wittenbergian, singing, wandering,
Picking up pittances thrown him from the windows
Of folk who oped them wide to hear, delighted,
The marvellous voice. Yet so the pittance fed him
And gave him strength to sing, 'twas all his care:
The song his life was; the scant food it purchased
Was but the fuel of force to sing again.
Older he than the German lad, no child—
Though young, a man; and a man's great baritone
His voice was, noble, grand, glorious, humane,—
That not alone the idlers in the houses,
Or the easy and sheltered busy, threw up shutter
And sash to catch the tones, but in the streets
Throngs stopped, of busy men and laborers,
Of all the grades of labor, from the scholar,
From busy merchant, to the carrier of the hod,
Yea, to the rag-picker, and round him close
All gathered, tarrying, forgetting, forgotten, fused
In human nature reduced from many ores
And molten to one ingot by that voice.

And so he sang, and sang to live, they said ;
But 'twas not so ; he sang, but lived to sing.

It chanced one day he passed a master's door,
Passed singing, and the master sat inside,
In the grand state of art rapt with delight
In harmonies that from his mind to fingers,
And through the fingers to the strings, and then
Through trembling strings, escaped to the atmosphere,
Till, in the air fallen and folded, they swept
Again into another brain entranced,
Like his from whom they sprang, with holy pleasure.

Athwart this harmony burst the young man's song,
And through the pure delight a keener joy
Pierced like a blade of light the master's heart,
And through the rich sweet sounds the richer sound
Ran mingling, yet unmingled. As a stream
Of fragrances from the wild turf may rise
And float, still individual, through the air,
Then kiss the utmost leaves, and in them merge,
In living veins,—so swelled, so rose the sound.
The master started from his instrument
At tones from heaven's own instrument more rich
Than aught of human make, though these be rich
With heaven's descended powers, and straightway ran

No leap of the sound to lose, eager for all ;
Then quickly, as joy moves, or, quicker, wonder,
Flew to the door and hailed the lad, and called
And bade him come, and quicker still in-drew him
From marveling crowds and listening wanderers,
And asked from him again the wondrous sound
Of that deep voice, which in its depth was light
And in its highest reach majestic depth.
From the which hour they never parted, the twain,
But lived together, master and pupil : the one
A king of power, of masterful lore of art,
And full of fervent love ; the other, a prince,
The king's own son by spiritual getting,
Who for the king-father's love a filial gave
And took his lessons with a rich affection.
And so within the mind as well as heart,
And so in skillful body eke as well,
The lessons nursed a still more glorious music.
Began he now to sing as he had never
Of singing dreamed, or learned that any throat
Could utter such divinity of sound.
But all in tone—by arduous exercises,
Rich rising grades. No daisied meads of tunes
Did he, the severe moraler in music,
Permit his precious charge to tread in dalliance :
Nay, nay, but stern gymnastic day by day
And many hours each day. And murmured not
John Atheling, but toiled and wrought his best
For double love,—love of his master's art
And of his master: nay, a triple love,—

For precious to him were his glorious tones
Out-pouring, daily more engendered, strong
From breast strong growing, and from tuneful throat
Unfeigned first, then refining, like fine gold
Refined, till what seemed perfect grew perfection.
And so, I say, they lived, master and lad
Growing together, and in daily happiness,
The master growing in pride and joyfulness,
The pupil in his art, and both in love.

II.

So five bright years together. Then one day
The lad came running (for, though man full grown,
Simple he was at heart, and boyish too,
As pure and holy music keeps its votaries),—
Came running, as I said, with glee uncommon,
And cried, "Dear master, pray thee, let me sing
What now is ravishing my heart. For early
This morn, full early, yea, in the very dawn,
I heard sweet sounds, and I could sleep no more:
Sweet sounds, I say, as in imagination
Woke me my voice as thou would'st have it be;
And I could almost see the tones, they thrilled
So in the air, as thou wouldst have them be.
So I arose, voice-waked, voice-led, and thus
By thee led, master, for thou hast led the voice,
And forth into the park (thou knowest the place)
I hastened, following the sounds, nay, running

To come up with the voice which seemed thy soul,
Thy tutoring spirit, heart and mind together,
Drawing me on, as I a stranger were
To both, yet knowing both and owning them.
And there I heard, O master, other sounds
That were diviner than my voice, thy dreams,
Our mingled dreams and toils ; for all the trees,
The tips of trees, the tender nodding reeds
Above the waters, yea, the breasts of flowers,
And all the weaving of the ecstasies
Of soft green branches tossing in the morning,
Were vocal with bird-songs. O how they sang !
And how their pinions whirred and quivered, clipped
By the sharp light—harmlessly, for still they flew!
What multitudes ! as there they came, not gathered
In any ranks, but sprinkled like the dew
Wherever a green place could hold a foot
Of a sweet singer, all pouring forth in one
Their glorious matins to the rising sun,
And, as I thought, to One above the sun.
Then as I listened, I could catch, my master,—
Not in one strain, not in one songster's notes,
But in them all, and laying each by each,
As down they fluttered, perching in my sense
From different heights, yea, up from coverts low,
Till the whole air a habitation seemed
Whence carols—gentle guests—crowded my ear,—
A melody, voice pieced by note and note

From out their marvelous throats, with tones so
high
They pierced the ether, and so heavy-sweet
They sank like weight into my soul;—I pieced
A melody, which brought me then to thee,
As every path to the horizon leads;
For thou art always in my skies. And sky-like
This music is ; dear master, let me sing it."
But said the master, as one might chide a child
For some brave fault, a fault, yet still most precious,
" Nay, nay, my boy, I tell thee nay ; 'tis naught.
Thou hast been ravished by the birds' shrill throats.
'Tis well ; they are pretty singers, I love them
well,
Yea, and myself do hear them with delight,—
Howbeit, old to suck the dawn's dank humors
And let its nipping shrewdness to this arm
That hath rheumatic murmurs in the elbow,
To hear the birds complain of dew's excess
Unto the princely sun. But speak not thou
Of melodies to sing ; come, tame thy heart ;
This is the hour of task ; take thou thy stand ;
Here is thy exercise ; so, now begin."

III.

'Twas not long after this when came the youth
One golden noon, and with noon in his cheeks,
There so was harvested meridian joy.
" Master," he said, " O wonderful, and then
More wonderful, and still most heavenly strange !

John Atheling

How can I tell thee what hath happened to me?
I have such splendor for thee in my soul,
To leap like fairies' dances—nay, not so,
But like religious chant—into thine ear.
'Twas but an hour ago, that at high noon
I stood upon the bridge that clasps the river,
Round which, thou knowest, the great factories gather
That pour their mingling black and white, like vestures
Of spiritual nuns, through the adjacent isles
Of the silent grove. And it was noon, just noon,
When from the labors of the morn the workers
Had stopped for rest and bodily food. First sprang
The vocal breath from one great whistle; answered
Another then, and then a third; then others,
Each following each, and hastening, clustering,
So that the slow first tones seemed weaving rhythms
For figures after, as on thy instrument
Oft thou hast shown me; and therewith sweet tune
Flowed forth, note following note, symmetrical,
Till voice and glorious melody I heard,
Made of the whistles' tones; first solemn, slow,
Then gradually, as one ran on another,
Adding to the mighty melody new figures
Of rapid notes and curving runs of notes,
Till what began so serious and grand
Took flight for very joy into the heavens,—

But not less grand nor serious for the joy,
The quivering throngs of notes lifting it up
Like wings. Master, it seized me! Bid me, I pray thee,
I pray thee bid me, for I can sing it thee."
This time the master frowned, and answered shortly,
"Dost see the hour? Chatter no more, but come,
Take thou thy lesson; sing this minor scale,
And see thou blur not these clipped intervals
Where I have marked them in, strangers to thee.

IV.

So 'twas, that erst at morn when Atheling's soul
Was ravished with the bird-songs, and at noon,
When the strange shrieks of steam pipes in his heart
To music grew, first did the master speak
To him as to a child from a wrong caressed;
Then frown on him and bid him to his task.
But all the same (for what's in soul will out)
He came one evening, later by a month,
Looking like one in whom experience
Had bloomed into a fervor, and thus spake:
"A strange thing, master, a moving, mighty thing!
Know that this evening I had wandered early,
Till I had found me at a crossing street
Where throngs of men were sweeping by me, busy
Returning from more business; and women too,

Yea, even girls and boys, all tired, all glad
To be let out into the air from labor.
Voices, released, rang loud on every side ;
On pavements the crowds rattled, and thronging teams
Jostled each other to the driver's call
And crack of whip,—sometimes a wrathful scream,
Though soon engulfed in the great roar that rose,
Like wind and wave commingled on the coast,
Around me. And the sharp, shrill tread of feet
On pavement, multitudinous, came up
To top the roar, shot with sheen gleams of voices.
I heard a distant bell, clanging before,
Now rolling with the rest, so that all seemed
An instant as if all were bells, different,
But ringing with one thought in many parts.
Ah, master, it was grand, this symphony,
Of hurrying men and rustling dress of women,
The boy's hallo, the laugh of girls (what weddings !),
And prattle of toddling babes, led by their hands,
The rattling crowds, the teamster's shout, dogs barking,
The clangor of great doors opening and shutting,
All mingled in one vast reverberation
Which to my sense was wondrous harmony.
I lost myself, I was at home with thee ;
I heard thee playing, I beheld thy hands
Calling these peals tumultuous of sound
From out a vast sublimity of pipes

Towering in an organ with ten thousand pedals
Of base that roared like flame, and piped with notes
Of reeds and flutes that shot aloft like sparks.
I tell thee I could play that harmony ;
It hath lived in me while I have run to thee
And floating a-top of it a melody
Which played the flutes and reeds unto the base.
O let me play ; for though my fingers skill not
To gather all these ecstasies, like thine,
Yet I can beacon thine imagination,
Till thou canst play the whole, and I can sing thee
The splendid melody that ran above,
Can sing it perfectly :—dear master, bid me."
Now rose the man in wrath, assuaged no longer,
And from his eye shot menace ; his voice trembled;
"Silence !" he cried, "What shall I call thee ? Ingrate ?
Apostate ? Disobedient ? Or only foolish ?
What art thou, what ? A boy, a silly boy !
Ignorant thou art, ay, nothing ; thou art nothing.
Wouldst thou teach me, or rather I teach thee ?
Wilt thou come to me with thy silly tunes,
Begging to sing what I have set thee not,
And will not set, for I know well thy need,
And the right tasks to bring thee to the end !
Be done, I say ; thou shalt not sing one tune,
Nor dream of one to put it into sound,
Until I bid thee. Get thee to thy task.
In all thy silly dreams upon the streets,

Standing a-gawk, I doubt not, on a corner,
Amid the hurrying throngs that stared at thee
To see the silly flush burn in thy face,
I warrant me thou thought'st not of thy lesson
And of the exercise awaiting thee.
Stand to it now, and do thy task, I say."
Then, the while Atheling obeyed and sang
With sweet implicitness of faith obediently,
And the voice august that grander grew each day,
And more a mountain like, rooted past depth
In the central earth and towering to the skies,
Clad in all colors, in all lights and shadows,
From snowy white through glints of green and
brown
Down to the mountain's foot that stood on night,
So deep the valley of its rest,—swelled like a tide
That would o'erflow the horizon, ran the master
Away, and by himself fell on his knees,
And wept with joy, and prayed thanksgivingly,
Even for the very things that he had chided,
And gave God thanks for his great pupil's gifts.

V.

At last 'twas ended; thus the master spoke :
" My lad, my son, my more than son, go now,
I bid thee, for I have done all I can.
Thou hast done well, toiled manfully, and now
I send thee hence, though 'tis as if my heart
I took from out my breast and sent away.
But listen : since first I took thee from the street

No tune hast sung, not one, but only tasks,
To work like grim smiths at the splendid metal
Of thy grand voice, and hammer it to shape.
Now thou shalt go to foreign land, my son,
The home of song itself, where thou shalt bathe
In melodies, as the East bathes in the Ocean
When in the West the far beholder sees
Dawn lift his head from the horizon's pillow.
Yes, thou shalt feed on music, for thou has wrought it;
And great heaven-cleaving songs shall lift thee, teaching
Thy voice to fly as wings on either side
To bear thee to God's grace. And thou shalt find
There masters to thy mind, who shall reveal thee
These songs magnificent, and pour around thee
Such streams, yea, rivers, oceans, yea, of tune
As never birds had done, nor noon-tide pipes
Nor all the city's jar had stirred in thee.
This shall thy masters do ; and now I give thee
To them for love of thee, and of thy voice,
Which is heaven's gift to thee, and the world through thee.
But when by them thou art to glory led,
I charge thee, forget not me, but bend thy love
In memory over me, a richer crown
Even than these gray hairs. Farewell, my son."
So went John Atheling, mournfully, yet glad,
Though very glad, yet mournfully, to leave
His masterful, kind-stern and stern-kind teacher

Who him had taken for love and taught for love,
And bound for love to stern tasks day by day,
For love of him, of music, and of God,—
All one to him, for God lives in his gifts.
So went the youth, and on the high sea soon
Beneath his bounding heart the ship was bounding
On crests of waves that to him singing seemed
And saying severally, "Speed on, speed on!
We are the figures of the melodies
Which thou art hastening to, and thou shalt meet
Us there again, and in the rising tones,
The rising, tossing tones of jubilant tunes,
Or the great roll of solemn hymns of praise,
Thou shalt again float on us on a sea."
So sped the days, with ecstasies of sound,
With dreams of songs, with the sweet plashes breaking
Upon his ear of melodies far off,
As when a tide just setting toward the flood
First ripples gently on the farthest reef.
So sped the days; until the clouds grew black,
And the wind roared, and then drew breath, drew breath
And louder roared, with dreadful clamor, tearing
Down through mute striving clouds. The waters rose
To meet the roar of the wind, and joined in fury
And larum of ungovernable tempest.
What wind and waters lacked the thunders forged,

And where the clouds were rent, the lightnings laced them
In deeper seams of blackness. Under the vessel
Raged one storm and above another whirled;
Between them rolling it lay, crushed and ground,
Out-bruising the aroma of hearts, cries, prayers,
Like maize between the mill stones. It was doomed.
It could not float,—wrecked, torn, rent, broken, gaping;
Waters poured in and gained on laboring men
Till they forsook the work, foreswore it, crouching
To die. But this the singer saw not, heard not;
Or if he saw, he thought not life was going
But song was come. The elements in storm
Sang to him harmonies, and over them
Forth from his memory leaped melodies
Fitting the scene terrific, the awful moment.
So there upon the prow he stood, and sang,
While the wrecked vessel settled inch by inch
At the broken stern from which the rudder, twisted,
Was hurled by the curling wave into the sea.
He stood and sang; and rose the great grand voice
Heaven-high above the roar of elements,—
So high and full, it seemed as though they quailed,
And stopped to listen to the greater sound
Than they knew how to lift to heaven's ear.
He sang great requiems, and passion-music,

And a world's hope-music, which, Messiah-filled,
Broke o'er the earth as now the sea the vessel.
Now, now he could sing! Now melodies could mount
From memory's heart to voice, from voice to heaven;
And as he sang, thinking of naught but singing
And joyfulness that he was free to sing
With none forbiding, neither his master's frown
Nor conscience stern therewith, the people trembled;
They heard, they looked, they looked and heard, and then
Fell low on their knees, bent, crawled, crept, pressed around him,
Together clinging close and pressing closer,
All on their knees, with hands clasped and uplifted,
And with their uplifted hands their faces lifted
Toward him and toward the sky, the singer, and heaven
Whither flew the song. He sang, and hearts were stilled
Wilder than waters, lifted above the storm
As the ship sank below it: and at the highest,
When highest rose the song, down from the pinnacle
Of music rushed the vessel into the waters
That beat about its feet, and so was gone.

—*From "Poems."*

The poet discovereth that in all things he hath both cause and need of song.

If joyed I be, conjured am I to sing
And round my glee a merry music fling:
If I be grieved, like Philomel I sing,
Consoling with sweet plaints my nighted wing:
If I do love, what possible but sing
Memorial madrigals that round me ring:
If I do hate (which God forefend), I sing
To quell the clamor where the discords ding.
At morn, by noon, at eve, by night, which way
I look or walk or rest or run all day,
Naught can outhaste the angel bids me sing:
Need matters naught, song parleys not: or play,
Or work or loss or gain or flight or stay,
Pursuing raptures drive me till I sing.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet discovereth the "melodies of morn" at a neighboring tarn, and observeth with what glistening beauty water decorateth the earth.

Awake! Away! Out into the middle o' the mere!
Shy Day dips in, then maiden-mannered spyeth;
And Night, swart lover, following aye in fear,
Now from her streamy form and dripping beauties flyeth.
The birds hold showery matins, hailing the light
With warbling tribes. From bosky tops to rushes,
No sleepy bud i' the mass nor lazy bight
I' the stem but lacquered is by misty brushes.
Each trunk or branch or twig or leaf or thorn
A silver sheeny pearly vapor fameth;
From fern or grass or reed or rose or corn
Fall twinkling jewels crimson morning flameth.
Who drowseth late doth waste the flood of day;
O, out into the middle o' the mere! Awake! Away!

—*From "Discoveries.*

The poet discovereth again as never before "what a thought of God it was when he conceived a tree."

O, what a breathing creature! How he doth drink
The wind! With what a rapture flings his arms,
And races on the air!—the while he charms
The earth in which his foot doth grapple and sink!
'Tis sure he looks to heaven, sure he doth think
O' the sun, sure doth mark to fend alarms
From busy-singing friends, and ward from harms
Them all on whom his flowery eyelids wink.
O, come to me, strong thing! For well I know
I go but part to thee, and thou dost move
From thy firm tread to meet me in the way:
Come to me, mighty being! Yet wait, that so
I run and kiss thy foot, as doth behoove,
Under thine arms to hark and love and pray.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet discovereth that there is naught so real, or of so great might, as the ideal which he dreameth in his soul.

I dream: Whate'er doth hap or seem,
Whate'er I do or not—'tis one:
I never did what I would fain have done;
And when it falleth short—I dream.
I love: it lifts me not above;
The heart o' me is halt;—'tis vain:
To think or sing or pray or preach I strain,
But only come to this—to love.
Hope, sight, deeds, away they fly,
Far fly,—I can not follow so:
Strive, run, leap, or launch me high,
All 's fault,—I still am left below.
Yet naught doth vanish from me, only seem:
For this in full 's my real, what I dream.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet discovereth that he is not to be pardoned if he liveth not evermore with great company.

Up! where the majesties go, where thoughts assemble
Ermined in honor o' the levy, where 's glorious stately
Presence of gentle nobility, and heart a-tremble
Feeling the weight o' the world; where richly and greatly
Shine souls devout i' the love that ne'er will brook
A bourne to love, but from religious height
Surveys the world, nor ever yet forsook
A nobly needy cause fallen in fight,
Down, and scornfully trampled; where mighty mortals
Pitch a heroical siege, till the eastward brilliance
Forces the gate o' the darkness, and wicked portals,
Beaded with the dank o' the night, burst at the radiance.
O, up! where these glories be and heaven rings!
Up to them and live with them—leave small things.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet, walking in the city by night, discovereth a child sleeping in a basket-cradle on the curb of a common ill-purlieued street; and he discovereth how "evil-entreated" the child is.

O, thou 'rt out of place, thou 'rt out of place,
Sweet cherub, and thy "honey-heavy" eyes
With "slumber's dew" seem to refuse the skies
That lower and reek on thine abused face.
Where smut and smoke begrime the firm space
O' the most true heavens, and rank vapors rise
From stews and shambles and foul human sties,
Is 't room for thy most pure and slumberous grace?
Thou shouldst be sleeping in sweet country air,
Beneath skies unconfused, white daisies round thee,
Birds from low willows peeping at thy fair,
Vieing with gales to make dream-music sound thee;
And chanting brooks thy sleeping sigh should bear,
To tell pursuing angels they have found thee.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet discovereth once again, and passionately, the power and dignity of continuing to wish ardently the thing no longer to be hoped, forasmuch as to wish grandly is to live grandly, and little it matters what one obtaineth.

I think I 'd give my hand to have this thing,
Ay, and the one lop off his fellow if 't could buy
This prize: or bid them pluck out my right eye,
Grub out my ears, or crack them till they ring
With stale unmeaning noise; or let them bring
The roots of my tongue to the stringy shambles, or try
Unmortal cuts around my heart how nigh,—
If so I could attain this longed for thing.
Well—and I cannot get it, 'tis denied me,
And ambling Fortune spites me with her jeers;
Yet is she but befooled if she deride me,
She weareth motley by her idle leers:
The best in things unhad God doth provide me,
To wit, th' unhoped great wish unwaned with years.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet discovereth, by reverence of his Comrade, that the main joy is to behold that good things are on the earth.

Now have I the main thing, and can be glad!
Till I beheld thee love, thy pity fall,
I knew not such things were on earth withal:
That is the main,—henceforth I shall be glad.
What matter that by me such are not had?
Main is, earth hath them, doth them large install;
And I can wait—"naught 's long that ends at all:"
Small matter what by me forsooth is had.
O, rich—so preach I back thy sweet tuition—
Am I, or any one, when what we miss
We thank for its abundance in the earth:
And he is wealthy with a star's condition
Who happily the world doth lightsome kiss,
And love it, though it give not back his worth.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet discovereth that "man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble" song.

My earthly end can not be far, a bare
Seventh, perhaps, of the dear years now run,
Or if by reason of strength still more, a spare
Three score and ten, I think, will see me done.
What then? I'll swifter sing, as shrewd as child
That eats his supper fast to eat the more,
Against his comely nurse, howbeit mild,
Doth timely snatch him to his sleeping door.
Methinks it were full rich, when I must wend,
A song to be a-making as I go,
And fall asleep here with th' unfinished end,
To wake there still composing it a-glow.
Dear Song 's a friend to die with or to live,
That joy in either and for aye doth give.

—*From "Discoveries."*

The poet discovereth anew the text, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

O, what a streaming glory of the earth,
What freshet, this exuberance of joy!
'Tis torrents, and doth every thing destroy
That can be swept away and is no worth.
Bliss hath no question of its place or birth,
Nor chooseth,—'tis at home with girl or boy,
With women, nor with doughty men is coy;
Free of all presences this orient mirth.
Hold! Hark! The glorious battle of bliss
That tops the musical frolic—how it rang!
Soft! Hush! Th' imperial jubilant kiss
O' the love-discoursing zephyr—how it sang!
Go to! Go to! The earth makes full of this,
Since the orb trembled and the first morning sprang.

—*From "Discoveries."*

Ah yes! come back, dear one, come back,
  Come back to me!
Thou 'rt gone so far that for the lack
  I grieve of thee:
  O, thou dost stay
  So far away,
  So very far away,
  Darkened is day:
And yet—never hast thou gone from me,
                And canst not.

Ah yes! I look, dear one, I look,
  I look for thee,
And think perhaps in some dear nook
  Thou hid'st from me:
  But no; afar,
  And like a star,
  A disappearing star,
  Thy graces are:
And yet—never hast thou gone from me,
                And canst not.

Ah yes! the time, dear one, the time,
  The time is long
While thou art far in other clime;
  Fails my lone song.

Hope hard doth hold,
But I grow old,
I grow most swiftly old,
And life grows cold:
And yet—never hast thou gone from me,
And canst not.

For O! I wait, dear one, I wait,
I wait thee here;
All day, all night I watch, till late
Stars reappear:
So lifts thy light
Above the night,
But thou beyond the night
Art gone from sight:
And yet—never hast thou gone from me,
And canst not.

And O! thy heart, dear one, thy heart,
Thy heart is held;
Thy feet must journey, must depart,—
Heart 's not compelled.
Around earth's vast
Thy form hath passed
Awhile; thy heart, not passed,
In mine is fast:
For O!—never hast thou gone from me,
And canst not.

—*From "Songs."*

When April's changeable sweet face doth show
An early peeping light,
I love full oft
Betimes at morning from the house to go
With quick delight:
The sun and flowery thrift
Again within my twice-waked eye do blow.

And the dulled ear of all my sleepy stay
The livelong night within,
Opens alert
In woods where meet the voices of the day
In charming din:
The sweet and musical art
Of winds and birds concerting mark my way.

Then under eye and ear the merry Spring
Doth fancy-fill my feet,
And swift I run
To follow soft and brown woods-paths that bring
Me odors sweet:
The forest rounds an urn
More redolent than rose-jars of a king.

Nor eye nor ear nor foot nor delicate sense
Of freshening fragrancies—
Not these alone
Bedew the time's sweet wandering expense
With ecstacies:
In arborous valley-lane
The flavorous runnels pour me wine intense.

Sweet sights and sounds and gusts, and mossy mould
That flatters idle foot,
Now these are seasoned
With racy relishes such as to hold
In heart are put:
My happy love is opened
To the sweet things my senses do enfold.

—*From "Songs."*

SONG

AWAKE, my boy!
Thy cheek hath kissed
Its twin rose, Dawn!
Awake for joy!
A day is born,
And earth is blest!
For under tufts of grass lies the lark's nest,
And sparkle beads of dew on the earth's breast,
Far overhead the white clouds are sailing,
And on the hills soft shadows are trailing.

Now sleep, boy bright!
Sweet, go to sleep!
With eider-down
Of dreams, brown Night
Shall weight thee down,
And fold thee deep.
The water-gate is shut and the mill stops;
The evening star climbs over the hill tops;
White fleece, like wool, descends on the meadow,
And on the owl's nest deepens the shadow.

—*From "Poems."*

Up to the top o' the trees,
Where sway the bird and breeze,
And Song's wild eyes
Look to the skies:
Up to the top o' the trees!

Up to the peaks o' the cloud,
Where Echo's suburbs crowd
The lightning's flash
And thunderous crash:
Up to the peaks o' the cloud!

Nay, I will walk on the earth;
My love them all is worth:
In Love I see
All of them be,
And more—I will walk on the earth!

—*From "Songs."*

THE FRINGED GENTIAN.

Now tell me if in all the earth
There be a flower more beautiful,
More exquisite,
More praises-fit,
More plentiful
In every lovely grace
That can endue and fill its little space with worth.

So tender-blue and modest 'tis,
So simple and so temperate,—
No coy distress,
Yet forward less,—
So sweet frank state
That never man can sigh
For fairer thing when looks that fringéd eye to his.

It bloometh when the months are late,
When other sweets are fugitive,
Or when the yellow
Of fields all mellow
A glow doth give
That frights that tender hue
Till curling fringe conceals the sweet-eyed blue sedate.

How dear the angled goblet seems
Of calix-cup's pale verdancy,
    What creature-look
    Each feature took,
    Whose modesty
    Met the all-charméd light
As if the lashes opened unto sight from dreams!

I love the beautiful sweet being:
My heart is full and innocent,
    All rapturous,
    Impetuous
    And opulent,
    When I make trembling-bold
To gather that dear soul for closer hold and seeing.

—*From "Songs."*

In the morning let me face the east!
There sits the light:
All morn, mid-morn, noon, after-day, forsooth,
Are in that dawn: Ay, let me face my youth,
Where birds wake up and bees and blossoms feast
On honeys bright.

In the evening let me face the west!
There sits the light:
Eve, mid-night, moon, stars, and new days, engage
In that red sky: Ay, let me face my age,
Where shades tent nightingales; and for the rest,
The sky is bright.

—*From "Songs."*

Life seemeth all one song:
If joyed, 'tis song;
If sad, still it doth belong
To the one calendar of song.

Life seemeth all one time:
If old, much time;
If young, 'tis but at the prime
O' the one eternity of time.

Life seemeth all one love:
If thronged, full love;
If lone, still it hath above
The solitude heart's own sweet love.

—*From "Songs."*

There be two ranges of strange hills,
One is the breeding of thy youth,
And one of mine; and from their rills
This river where we plight our truth.

I ken my hills, thou markest thine,
But neither doth the other's know;
And now conjoined in river's shine,
We can not tell to what they flow.

The hills are sad that were unshared,
The unlearned ocean shall be known:
The sorrow can not be repaired,
But now and on is love's, my own.

—*From "Songs."*

The Light, that was full waked at merry morn,
Had climbed up eager to the ridge of day;
There Love met Light, whereat surprised each,
They fell to admiration both straightway.

But soon this Love and Light, as often haps
Twixt those too suddenly that friendly be,
Embraced no more like Love and Light, but set
Themselves full roundly on to disagree.

Now this the conflict was twixt Love and Light,—
To grant the other brighter each was loth:
And sooth by day they might dispute; but Love
Illumined midnight bright enough for both.

—*From "Songs."*

I waked—'twas bright; I rose—'twas fair;
I went forth in the bonny air;
The breeze blew on my cheek, my brow, my eyes,
And waked an image in my eyes.

I walked—how fresh! I breathed—how sweet!
The sun shone with a beaming heat:
The heat unbound the lockers of my heart,
And warmed an image in my heart.

I stand—all 's blithe; I look—all 's blest;
I said, "Kind Air, tell me love's rest."
"Love's rest" saith Air,—" 'tis to be true, devout,
Reverent in love, tender, devout."

I stay—for joy; I sing—for praise:
Devout of love shall be my days,—
All days;—"But O, warm Light, when shall love end?"
"Love lives," said Light, "worlds without end."

—*From "Songs."*

I fell in pits of discontent,
And looked upon myself with eyes
Of disapproving, sad surprise,
To mark how ill was all my bent;
For I could gather in me little good,
And e'en that little in a shadow stood.

I found me wasteful, indolent,
Capricious, fitful, full of cries,
Most often foolish, never wise,
Morose to genial merriment,
And darksome-empty as a hollow grot
That on a sunny hill-side inks a blot.

So to myself malevolent,
My poor best deeds I did despise,
And nothing in me did assize
Of import to be excellent:
But then I read my heart, that it was true,
"And loved myself because myself loved you."

—*From "Songs."*

As one self-entered in a lion's den,
Waits savagery,
Not knowing how or whence or when,
How stung from bog or starved from fen,
The beasts may be,—

So I have trolled me to this lair of trade,
This wretchedness,
Where cruelty is scaled and paid,
And villain coarsened clamor made
A horridness.

I know not why this growling rabble rip
With bitter tooth,
And snarl their fangs from upper lip,
As it were pride to rend and strip,
And love no sooth.

This now I note, but now 'tis scrolled and fled,
Like witchery;
Song cometh—first 'tis hush o'ershed,
Then murmurs, wherein noise is dead
By poesy.

Ah! Freedom of my versing! Vision! Bliss!
The wranglers lie:
They think me kept with howl and hiss;
But Song disturbs me with a kiss—
Away I fly.

—*From "Songs."*

Thrifty Tom makes a call far out o' town,
Where a little meadow lark wears a quaint gown,—
O ho ho ho, ho ho ho, wears a quaint gown.

Sayeth Tom, prayeth Tom, "Ah, pretty thing,
Be a little cosy bird,—while I hark, sing:
Ay ay ay ay, ay ay ay, while I hark, sing."

But the bird cocks her head, roguish and coy,
"What will ye be giving now?—tell me that, boy:
Chee chee chee chee, chee chee chee,—tell me that, boy."

Thrifty Tom saith he 'll give love very fine:
"Ye should not be vaunting yours, but should woo mine,—
Ah ha ha ha, ha ha ha,—ye should woo mine."

—*From "Songs."*

I do defy ye, crabbéd age!
I 've seen ye, ne'er did feel ye:
Go, for another turn a page;
But I, a flip I deal ye.
Where'er I go, 'tis antic youth I bring,
No matter what I do, 'tis then I sing—Hillo and nonny,
Hillo, hillo, and tra la la,
Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

I 've seen ye catch a-many legs,
I can not e'en deny ye,
And make them worse than wooden pegs;
My nimble limbs belie ye:
Where'er I go, 'tis prancing feet I bring,
And what I skip to do, 'tis so I sing—Hillo and nonny,
Hillo, hillo, and tra la la,
Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

I 've see ye get into a head,
And make it dull or cranky;
But not with me so have ye sped,
And ye may try and thank 'e:
Where'er I go, 'tis tricksy wits I bring,
And if some wit 's to do, 'tis then I sing—Hillo and nonny,
Hillo, hillo, and tra la la,
Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

I 've seen ye get into a heart,
And make it sick and peevish;
But try your all, ye get no part
In mine, ye minion thievish:
For where I go, a hearty heart I bring,
If there be joys to do, 'tis I can sing—Hillo and
nonny,
Hillo, hillo, and tra la la,
Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

My love, my bonny, tell me now,
Didst ever know us agéd,
Or count what years upon the brow
Had made us cynic-sagéd?
Where'er we go, 'tis April's self we bring,
Give this or that to do, 'tis then we sing—Hillo
and nonny,
Hillo, hillo, and tra la la,
Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

Come, I will kiss thee here and here,
Thou sunny side of twenty,
And tumble up our youth, my dear,
With follies wise and plenty:
Where'er I go, 'tis love and love I bring,—
If wooing is to do, 'tis I can sing—Hillo and
nonny,
Hillo, hillo, and tra la la,
Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

—*From "Songs."*

MY CHILD

The little feet
Came flying to me down the skies,
Down the round stairway of the skies,
The dear, dear feet.

With what surprise
To him, to me, he trod the air,
The steps made only out of air,—
What sweet surprise!

And O, how fair!
With what a tenderness of grace,
What tender helplessness of grace,
The child was fair!

He stayed a space,
And filled with light my small-house room,
With light celestial all my room,
A little space.

Then a dear doom
Bade him bethink him whence he came;
So bright the white gates whence he came
'Twas no hard doom.

He felt a flame
Fill all the sky and blind the sun—
Beams of the home beyond the sun
Around him flame.

Now hath he run
Back up the stairway and the height,—
So late ran down he knew the height,
How up to run;

But left his light!
O, left it here to wane no more;
And from my house, to wane no more,
Spreadeth the light—

It drowns my shore,
The sea and shore.

—*From "Discoveries."*

SONG'S FREEDOM

I can not tell with what a joy I sing!
But, quotha, Song continueth me poor?
Yea, but what 's poverty with heart a-spring?

But, quotha, it hath pent me up obscure—
Men pass me? Yea, but not more than I boast
That I pass too. The sun's eye is my cure.

But, quotha, it hath drowned me on lone coast,
Or stabbed me to a phantom in a crowd?
Yea, but I am a very seeing ghost.

But, quotha, many berate me long and loud,
And mar my music? Yea, poor things! Bad ears—
Clogged with a vogue. Some hear. They keep me proud.

But, quotha,—Nay, I prythee, drop thy drears:
What misseth mark it is not well to fling,
Nor quarrel with what gaily perseveres:

I can not tell thee with what joy I sing.

—*From "Discoveries."*

RAPTURES

Methinks all natural things are ecstacies:
Or if forerun of pain, yet bliss at last,
And lavish of their golden treasuries.

Hence equal, living or dying, is reason cast
Among the sweets that make a fate a choice,
And we are quiet, howso things go fast.

Attend! With what a sweetness every voice
Singeth the swift days of his present state,
And still while journey speeds doth much rejoice.

Mere breath is jocund at no common rate,
And life 's true sport,—the sun-fish love to leap;
And insect choirs the terse night elate.

Hence death, meseems, must be a sport more deep,
The pearliest plunge reserved for the ending,
Whose lights their glories for that diver keep.

What a profuse estate may wait for spending
On the new heir its heaping treasuries,
And dying's self be like bright billows blending!

For still, methinks, Nature is ecstacies.

—*From "Discoveries."*

SONG'S PIETY

If I could tell once how my carols pour,
All pour like silvery rushing torrents in,
And in will rush and never will give o'er—

If I could tell this, should I sing the better,
Chant more harmoniously by a letter,
Ride fancy's rosy wings without a fetter?

Give o'er this inquest, this vain, absent lore,
And lore that is impiety; let din,
Let din of doubts, make room for God's *Sing more.*

—*From "Discoveries."*

LOVE'S ONE

The heavens be full of stars, but one is mine,
Is mine because I am too leal, too small,
Too small and leal to note the hosts that shine.

My heart is like a little pool i' the grass;
The heavens of stars look down and round me pass,
But I hold only one beam of the mass.

That shine the many round me I divine,
Divine, but I reflect but thee of all,—
Of all that bring their company to thine.

—*From "Discoveries"*

CONJUGATION

Prythee, loved lovely lover, echo me.
O me! I will intone thee so sweet song,
Sweet song o' heart, constrained thou wilt be.

Then will I echo thy dear echo, love,
Till all the air around us and above
Voice as the mourning of a mated dove.

'Twill be that to dear echoes of me and thee,
And thee and me, love-unisons belong,
Belong like light to a brook, birds to a tree.

—*From "Discoveries."*

SPRING.

The softened mould is brown and warm,
  The early blossoms break,
And loosened streams along their banks
  A mossy verdure make.

A dewy light broods o'er the earth,
  A sweetness new and rare,
And tumults of brook, bird and breeze
  With music wake the air.

Awake, O Heart, awake and learn
  The secret of the Spring!
From winter-sleep it comes like light,
  Or as a bird on wing.

And if I shall be winter-locked,
  As sometimes I may be;
If bitter storms and freezing snows
  Come whirling down on me—

Let me lie patient, like the earth,
  And say, "This shall be rest;"
And then, O Lord, at thy dear call,
  Arise renewed and blest.

—From "Unity Hymns and Chorals."

CAMEO XIX.

What 's fame, sweet verse? 'Tis only this,
That others know with what a bliss
Thou wardest me, and what a kiss.
But if thou choose a secret love,
I would not show thee for the world
To foreign eyes, but keep thee pearled
In one hid gem my heart above.
'Tis so I love thee all submiss;
The which subdues fell care, I wis.

—*From "Sonnets."*

CAMEO XXIX.

R. & R.

A lovely summer together, girls!
'Tis done; this silken flag Time furls—
The fire o' the season spent up-whirls.
Now one hath gone, the other stays;
And what shall my poor old fond heart do,
Since naught is whole without my two!
Ah me! the sad, the sad half-days!
The song o' my heart like a brook out-purls;
But where are your rosy feet, my girls?

—*From "Sonnets."*

CAMEO XV.

I do defy thee, daily Sun,
In braver sky thine arc to run
Or in more quiet west be done
Than in my heart. What though a grief
Invade me fiercely? So doth spot
Mix with thy disk; it matters not.
Who sees it in thy mighty sheaf
Of golden darts? I will be one
Whose woe 's light-lost like thine, great Sun.

—*From "Sonnets."*

CAMEO LI.

When flieth forth a carrier dove—
Plumes preened close as velvet glove—
And like swift skiff doth onward shove
His air-wave way, he minds me, dear,
Of thee who, far by space apart,
Dost find straight air-way to my heart,
Nor leav'st me lone, nor fail'st me near
By that sweet light about, above,—
My book's last word—thy love.

—*From "Sonnets."*

LOVE AND LAW.

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names." **Psalm 147: 3, 4.**

Hebrew, who taught thee side by side to set
These brave thoughts? For by thy words,
If standing on the earth we watch the sky,
We see thee to a constellation toss
This heavy world; but if adown
About our feet we look, heaven falls to earth,
And such bright mercies throng the way, in numbers
Like sea-shore sands, that we wade deep in skies.
One Lord the same Lord is who healeth me
And tells the numerous stars! Bethink thee,—
This vast of peopled space of burning suns!
If with the pinions of terrific wind,
Potent to rend strong oaks, to tear down towers,
Tossing their guns like playthings in the air,
And twisting huge wrought-iron beams to curls,
If with this wind thou shouldst be borne, past moon,
Past sun, to catch a star,—how long
Thy dizzy journey? A hundred years?
Yea, a hundred hundred, that
By a thousand, that twice told—yea, more—
Riding on the back of a hurricane, to catch

The nearest camping of the populous heavens,
Whose watch-fires kindle in the plains of space.
And from that star new firmaments of stars
Thou wouldst behold, worlds on worlds,
Rolling on thy vision,—invisible here,—
Constellations strange of shining creatures
Sketching their mythic pictures on new skies;
Red orbs and fiery nebulæ, weird planets
Stranger than Saturn, and fierce, hairy comets.
And if upon that star thou shouldst outsingle
The faintest gleam of light, and to it leap,
Another firmament would rise before thee,
With worlds piled to the zenith. So following,
Forever, and forever, and forever,
And still forever multiplied forever.

No orb stands by itself, or sails or sings
Alone; each hath a lovely tune
Which it goes singing for itself, itself,
While all the melodies, agreeing, sound
In one, none marred, wrought to one vast
Of harmony. These round great lights a thread
Runs through, which strings them, like to burning gems,
Into a chain of evening-lighting stones
Hung round the neck of Righteousness: one thought,
One form, one Lord, one infinite creation,
Down to this little earth, where lovers' lamps
Are naught but little burning suns on tables,

And a tear, spilled, falls in a little sphere
Through space, in scrupulous curve, like rolling planet.

There is no great, no small, nor aught appraise
Can we, saying, This is the more important,
Or, This is but a mean and trifling part:
For all is great in the Eternal Purpose
That holds it, and the whole is naught beside
Eternal Life. What is this earth
Where men wage wars and build themselves high towers?
What are the planets moving concentric in curves
With earth, and what the stupendous sun
Tying unto itself these whirling worlds?
This system of huge worlds, their moons,
The monstrous sun binding them all together,
Are but as fine dust, by a man's hand
Cast to the sky. The mollusk and polyp,
The diatoms, whose thin silicious skins
Subside to beds of white and shining sand
And hosts of living little creatures in water,
In earth, or air,—these are the dust's dust.
Yea, on this imperious rolling ball,
What is man's body but a grain or mote?
And yet how spins the earth unhazarded,
And singing on its way serenely roves
Around the sun; how prompt the seasons are,
How full of luscious juices and sweet waters!
How lordly planets make their grave obeisance
Unto the king, revolve and glow, not hidden

Even by the sun's prodigious beam! How softly
And faithfully the moons attend their worlds,
Reflecting the sun's smile over the shoulder
Of night, when that brown nurse bids day begone,
And frowns upon the too indulgent light!
How man's body thrives, and little insects,
And zoophytes rooted like plants—how all
Flourish and swarm, momentous unto the Power
That throws a comet, sets a sun aflame,
And out of nebulæ expresses worlds.
Before Almightiness, the whole is naught;
But unto All-lovingness the polyp's hunger
Cries, and the beast's pangs in his barren den.
If human minds look out into the darkness
And gather rays of truth, 'tis His sight sees;
If human hearts do love, 'tis His love loves;
'Tis His joy joys, when joyful hearts rejoice;
He is eye's eye, heart's heart and being's being.

It can not be but grief and pain will come:
We know not how to strive and never fail;
We know not how to have and not to lose;
There is no way to love and not to fear;
There is no way to love and not to feel
The pangs of parting when seas roll between,
Or when in vain we seek a faithless love,
Or when—less loss—the sky-pits yawn, and friends
Fall out of sight into their blue abyss.
Then the One Lord takes up our weary woes

As he takes up the isles, or steers a star.
So wonderful his laws that he hath ways
To cope with our great pain.

God hath two temples—
The infinite of starry heavens, one,
Where shining ranks of servants throng and move
In unimaginable multitudes
At his command: the lowly soul
The other, where he hath made his mercy-seat.
One Life and Love he is through all that vast,
From star to heart. Swifter than light
Or thought he comes from some great sun convulsed,
To hold a heart that it break not too far.
He weighs it in his hand against a world;
It is as heavy to the Lord as all
His suns if it the more hath need of healing.
Praise! Praise! Thanksgiving! Praise! Amen!

—*From "Poems."*

WAIT ON THE LORD.

"Wait on the Lord! Be of good courage and he shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, ay, on the Lord." **Psalm 27: 14.**

On Psalmist's word
A Rabbin's voice is heard
Commenting, saying
To souls praying,
"Ora,
Et iterum ora;
Veniet hora
Qua tibi dabitur."

I heard a Master's speech
The same faith teach—
A Master dear to heart,
Standing far apart,
So great, so high above,
And yet with lowly men
Living, in toil and pain,
In meekness and in love.
He saith, "Ask, it shall be given;
Seek, ye shall find in heaven;
Knock, it shall opened be."
But not so sweet to know
The Master's lips have spoken so,

As my soul leaps to see
He speaketh like to all the holy men:
And softly comes again,
Like an echo in my ear,
The song of Hebrew seer,
"Ora,
Et iterum ora;
Veniet hora
Qua tibi dabitur."

O when the soul is faint,
When visions die,
When life is wrecked upon complaint,
And scattered lie
Hope's arrows—years long,
With purpose strong,
Kept bound within one sheaf—
When pain and loss and grief
Prey on us,
When thought and doubt and love
Weigh on us,
Then hear, all sounds above,
"Ora,
Et iterum ora;
Veniet hora
Qua tibi dabitur."

—*From "Poems."*

AMORIS AVARITIA.

I heard a voice moan in the dark,
A smothered voice, as if a heart
Sorrowed and pleaded from the ark
    Of a lone breast.
Then carefully I drew apart,
And listened, when I had come near,
To catch the words, if I might hear
    What so distressed.

Anon the sorrowful low moan
My sense translated to a tone,
Wherein the sounds took shape and made
    Words to my ear.
And thus they said: "So slight my need,
So very little I do need
To make me glad, how strange, how sad
    It is not here!"

With pity spake I: "Nay, sad heart,
Sad moaning voice, if 'tis so small
A thing will make thee glad for all,
    Now tell it me.
I have some power, perhaps an art
To compass this small thing that will
Endue with joy and blissful fill
    Thy path for thee."

Answered the mournful voice and said,
"Oh, give it me, this one small shred
Of wealth of earth, seas, heaven above—
    'Tis only this:
A great whole love, a tender love,
Thought, care and love to compass me
And live around me. This would be
    My all for bliss."

"All, all!" I cried. "I thought that just
Thou didst bemoan thee for some dust,
Some little scattering of the wind
    To make thy ease!
Ask this, beg 'wealth of Orm and Ind,'
Beseech the treasures over-decked
In all the vessels ever wrecked
    In all the seas;

"Ask me rocs' eggs to wheel thy car,
Or eagle's beak to bring a star,
Or griffin-guarded books that wake
    Arabian wiles;
Ask Hecla's fire or Kashmir snow,
To make thee ear-drops that shall glow
With flame around clear pearls, and shake
    Upon thy smiles;

"A mountain, ocean, iceberg ask,
And all the furs that swim or bask;

Call mammoths from their fossil pales
    For ivory bone;
Ask birds of paradise, and scrolled
Orchids that fly like birds, and gold,
Bronze, ruby, green ophidian scales
    From Amazon!

"Why these are dust, not hard to give,
Little to ask. If thou wilt live
But long enough, around thy feet
    I'll heap these things.
But love! a heart! a true heart's heat!
Love living round thee, and love's lone
Thoughts ever trembling on thine own
    Like sound on strings,—

"Like sound on strings, where each to each
Belongs, nor e'er dissever may
When either wakes!—'tis heaven! Dost know
    Thou askest heaven?
Oh, fall upon thy knees; beseech
Forgiveness for thine avarice. Pray
To offer up thy pain, and go
    Confessed and shriven."

—*From "Poems"*

IMMORTAL

If awful throes should shake the world
Level, and on me Alps were hurled,
I should not be crushed:
If heaven crumbled and stars fell like rain,
Making seas mist and melting the rocky plain,
My voice would not be hushed:
If the inner firmament, which makes the dome
Of the human head an infinite sky, Reason's high
home,
Should grow opaque with nimbus-clouds and
horrid storms
Of wild, discordant thoughts and insane forms,
Still in the jarring mind some light would linger,
by His ways,
Who in babes' mouths wakes praise:
But if my love were gone, if I felt not the pang
Of tenderness, nor ever in me rang
The peals of human sorrow,—I were dead where
life doth start.
Come, Friend, I'll hold thee closer to my heart!
My love of thee
Is life in me.

—*From "Poems"*

Dreams are the glow of the day's embers. The flame
Hath all forsaken the living deeds, and lo!
Their shapes that now lie sembling slumber, glow
In the still witching time with natural aim.
Voices aloud by day that praise or blame
Whisper ghostly by night: and as none show
Themselves to self save stript, so I do know
Me stript in dreams, unbraced by fear or fame.
Now of those visions let my soul be still,
Still, thankful, and fearful; and let no mind
In mire that wallows look for phantoms clean.
For I can call me angels when I will,
And never imps by night to me inclined
But whom by day my soul hath sought and seen.

—*From "Sonnets."*

If I be poor, what of 't? There be the rich:
If I be lone, fine companies do sit:
If I be in the shade, there is a niche
That up for bards and sages hath been lit.
If I be sad, 'tis so; but some are bliss'd:
If I be low, some foot the tops above:
If I be loveless still, I see some kiss'd
And warm entwined round with arms of love.
If I be penned, I stand; but powers outspread:
What I have small, I see doth more abound:
If I have little lore, riseth some head
Marveled with gift that doth the spheres expound.
When 'mong these thronging things I sing my way,
I lose me in them, then am rich as they.

—*From "Sonnets."*

Brother, thee I beheld entomb thy dead,
And weep therewith. Well, tears are upland springs;
Let flow; but listen to them. Over bed
Filled from the hills thy sorrow flows and sings.
Did ever fall the rain or river flow
But it rolled down from an aerial place?
So is thy love an altitude, below
From whose sublimity tears run apace.
Follow thy freshet of grief, climb up its course
Far to thy tops of love, where wilt thou be
When thou shalt sit with sorrow at its source?
On heights wilt stand, the sky engulfing thee.
So tears run down, love up, but not in strife;
They mean one heaven, both font and port of life.

—*From "Sonnets."*

Sit ye, children: I'll tell ye a fairy tale:
What? because ye are sprites and play me tricks
Yourselves, and with your waggish frolics mix
My poor old pate that grows totty and frail?
Not so! The Elfin Chronicles I hail
For love of airy Ariel, antic nix.
On such blithe fancies I my soul do fix
Against the nipping o' the world's chill gale.
Ah! little ones, in regions wonderful
Keep ye your souls enchanted, from the din
Where common clamors and mean maxims pass;
So shall ye live in parleys beautiful—
Nay, what? The tale? Ah! yes; I will begin:
"Once on a time, and a very good time it was"—

—*From "Sonnets."*

"Where be your gibes now," thou chalked mock,
And thy heart-sick gags? Art gone of thine own staleness?
And all the melancholy players, over whose paleness
Were dabbed the lies of smiles and ruby stock
Of health? Yon old ring, like a ghost, doth knock
At my heart strangely, with vehement love, and the frailness
Of our mortal state stares from the painted haleness
On the tan where dizzy phantom-riders flock.
Have ye died, worn out? Or doth poverty pinch ye?
Or have ye fallen and become no better
Than your luxurious betters that beheld ye?
Whate'er you do or be or suffer, "inch ye
Along," dear souls; I would not spend a letter
But to love ye and moan the strange woes that compelled ye.

—*From "Sonnets."*

Note: For some weeks I passed often by a field where was an old circus ring.

The furious potter! What if in the span
Of his fantastic fury he had died
Reviled for will perverse, before the pride
Of his accomplishment undid the ban?
And ah! what souls have lived that close up ran
To some fine verge—of art, letters, or tide
Of wealth, or love—full potent, and just this side
O' the vantage stopped, of man unknown—of man!
For them who persevere, being given to live,
And by a leap surpass the difficult bar,
All men have love, and flood their fame abroad;
But who to them that drop and die doth give
Love and reversion, and uplift them far?
For this they have no one but God. But God!

—*From "Sonnets."*

Palissy.

The day no end to earth's sweet beauty shows,
But night no bounds of worlds where beauty springs:
If round this earth, this sun, such fairness clings,
What beauteous wealth those numerous fires compose.
This glory and grace, that doth no end disclose,
Cometh of endless love; to Him it sings
Who "taketh up the isles as little things,"
In Whom the sparrows feed, the lily blows.
What can I with these beauties made of Love,
These boundless glories? What but cleave to sky,
To earth, loving Love's creatures joyfully!
O this doth lift me time and breath above:
Perforce I am one soul with what I cry
In love unto,—of one eternity.

—*From "Sonnets."*

What matters who they be that greatness mold
In their own hands, so be it the greatness thrive?
First place hath this, that glorious beauties hive
In the blest earth; second, whose fortunes hold
Fair and fine things: and first, that worlds enfold
Amazing loves, that do from Heavens arrive
Like precious freights; but second, who contrive
That happy they shall wear the cloth of gold.
If thou of thine own coffers be so glad,
Have I not larger wit to lend me joy,
That know t' exult in wealth without an end
Harbored in earth? And shall I not be clad
In natural relish, though one hard by employ
More of some stuffs? Go to! Thou 'rt churlish, friend.

—*From "Sonnets.'*

Round me the waters roar in raging train:
Far as eye sees they push like wild herds past
And stream their manes, the boat a pannier vast
That many broad and vaulting backs sustain.
Yet them I ride as still as the deep plain
On which they prance, because the watery blast
Uncalms not love, that moots no fear, but fast
Holds like still skies, though earth may heave and strain.
Therefore, ho! for ye, steeds and spirits wild!
On with ye! rush, and let your breathing blow,
And bear me with you at your furious will.
I shall sit on you quiet as a child;
And ye, like storms flung against heaven, but show
Heights out of reach, and heart of love how still.

—*From "Sonnets."*

I beseech thee, soul, learn to know the heroic.
Mistake not: 'tis not flames of poetic fire
Scattering sparks, e'en though these fly up higher
Than air to be fixed stars; nor is 't heroic
To dare wounds—cowards do so; nay, nor heroic
To be adventurous, unlawful, to tire
The world's ear with fame of war, desire,
Art, magnificence: these be not heroic.
That love and truth are strength the hero believeth;
Extremity endureth, yet not grieveth;
And what his lot is, as from God receiveth.
And this I see—the mighty Lord forsaketh
Wit, wealth and power—He made them; but He taketh
The hero in ward the while himself he maketh.

—*From "Sonnets."*

I know not what my soul hates more and worse
Than the pale brows of whimpering poets—they
Who not e'en love but must go "faint," "fall," say
"We sicken," "pine" and "die" in weeping verse.
O fine-voiced harmonies, must ye rehearse
These feeble folk, who swim or swamp in whey
Like meagre curds, more thin than ghosts by day,
Or evening scud that caps of wind disperse?
What! must sweet words, fine vocables, and song,
That link all men and mark mankind, serve them
Who suck a jaundice from th' inveterate green?
Out wi' the pack! I love bards firm and strong:
My soul doth void the pulers—broods I'd hem
Like bats in rosy fogs, nor seeing nor seen.

—*From "Sonnets."*

I should know well that many a time and over
I trample on the face of heavenly dooms;
Yet this I know not; but amid the glooms
Of my dull folly plod, a daftie rover.
I huddle precious things like yokel drover
That markets lambs through lanes of flowery plumes,
Missing the modesties where lily blooms,
And crests of perfumes on mead-seas of clover.
'Tis mournful to smell flowers with swinish snout,
Sniffing the lovely beings for provender,
The while they fling their fragrances about:
Divine to know the divine, so to confer
With God in his least things by heart devout,
And solemnize each heavenly messenger.

—*From "Sonnets."*

Dear being, my love 's alive to thee, thou lookest
So sorry. In all my life I never met
An eye more humbly wistful, nor brow beset
With more of patient pain. Insult thou brookest
In plenty; blows, harsh voices, sneers thou tookest
Yestreen, nor thinkest other things to get
This sunny noon. Thou art too sore to fret,—
As thou like a sad nun the world forsookest
Heartbroken. If I did give thee but a nod,
Thy starving heart would leap, thou 'ldst come, and think
A bone riches, chill corners luxury.
'Tis strange and sad how little thou ask'st of God,
Or of the world; yet wander till thou sink,
Thou find'st that little nowhere left for thee.

—*From "Sonnets."*

Note: To a vagrant dog.

Why give I not the nod would make thee leap
And thy heart throb, eyes glow and body all
Tremble with foreign promise? To some befall
Such fortune as on thee my beck would heap.
Poor friend, sad distance grade by grade doth creep
'Twixt us, both poor; eke now my sole lone stall
Shelters a stray o' thy kind, whom I did call
From street for pity, for pity and love do keep.
If I could give thee, sad, unspeaking one,
A meed of rescue, better than compassion,
What could I with yon next awaiting me?
Turn off thine eyes from me, that look be done,
That I may go. I shrive me in this fashion—
Thou canst forget me, as I cannot thee.

—*From "Sonnets."*

Note: See foregoing sonnet.

To what's changeable, Death is colleague loving and warm:
All grow but in degrees, since creatures be
Imperfect and, how suave soe'er we see
The pretty things, do lack their righteous norm.
Death is no fellow of perfectness. The storm
May ply all havoc, destruction be set free—
What change needeth the finished thing to flee
Or fear? Death hath no office to perform.
Therefore, kind Death, thou art the superscript
Of the incomplete, on their foreheads written,
Like water, now ice, but charactered to flow.
Thou signifiest that things unfinished, stript
For a new race unto perfectness, fiery smitten,
Now to a new degree do onward go.

—*From "Sonnets."*

If I be questioned whether 't be the day
Doth follow night around the flowery world,
Or whether night, with sandals dewy pearled,
Pursue the morn, that wooed will not delay,—
I answer thus: First tell me which makes way,
My love to me, or I to her, when furled
The camping light's gold streamers be, and curled
With spiral vapors falleth twilight ray?
If 'tis my part to woo with will, hath erst
Her beauty not pursued me, will or no,
And natural the more as 'tis not willed?
Like day and night, a twain without a first,
True lovers know not either follows so,
Or either leads—whom both one love hath filled.

—*From "Sonnets.*

'Tis very dark: keep close to me, my True,—
For love, not pity, that we go together
Where now 'tis dark: but darkness only nether,
Whence "fiery oes engild" the sunless blue.
I am as with a lamp I did pursue
Deep forest aisles in foul and pitchy weather
At night, eye strained, like a wild thing at tether,
To pierce the glooms that do the path imbrue.
But when I pause afraid, what next unknowing,
Around me then the lantern in my hand
Like to a little sky illumes a view:
I linger central in the circle glowing,
And its soft fringes: but when from off that stand
I must move on, keep close to me, my True.

—*From "Sonnets."*

O love, let us amass large memories
Of enterprises, for these be true love's wealth;
To mix in brave things and fine pleasantries,
Adventures, thoughts, great works, is lovers' health;
Whereby, when Age creeps on us craftily,
He findeth open doors and no forbiddance,
But he may feed at his will, so happily
Our stores keep Age and us with Youth's fair riddance.
What though with age sweet vagabondage cease,—
We can not dance so, climb so, as we did,
Yet love 's life-wealthy if with life 's decrease
Youth leave us fortune in twain memories hid.
Therefore, dear love, pile up occasions, spare not;
In these married forever, more we care not.

—*From "Sonnets."*

Listening the parlance of dewy leaves that spill
Their syllables at morning dripping words
To one another, or lulling lapse of rill,
Or fall and filter of rain, or hidden birds
Of night with their soft notes, or brooding thrill
Of hush 'fore dawn, or twilight low of herds
Homeward, and village hum becoming still,
Or watery hush that copse of willow girds,—
With these a stillness doth my spirit hold
Submiss to silence hallowed and old;
For here I am not wont to speak, nor bold
Unto the muteness that doth all enfold;
But, O beloved, 'tis then I am most near
Fit voice of love for thee when silent here.

—*From "Sonnets."*

"Put out the light, and then put out the light!"
He takes my eyes who takes the sun away:
These many years thou art my golden day,
And going now thou blindest all my sight.
No more in this imperial verse I write,
And am too newly darkened yet to stray
To other song: the more for thee I pray,
From love's lone cell enwalled in my night.
In this sweet master-form thou wert my form,
And hast enriched my every measure writ—
Thou wert my heart, thought, dream, my music all.
How can I with no heart a verse make warm,
Or see to follow dark what thy love lit?—
Lest I do fear, halt, grope, go ill and fall.

—*From "Sonnets."*

MARCH SONG.

I say, bluff March,
You 're not so rough a fellow
As you look.
Here 's a brook
Will show the sunny yellow
Of heaven's bright arch,
And the leaping little billows
Laugh at pussies on the willows,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, bluff March!

I say, bright birds,
Ye prophesy a singing
Wide a-field,
And a yield
Of verdure that is springing
To feed blithe herds,
When your wavy shadow passes
Over wavy-wavy grasses,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, bright birds!

I say, brown buds,
Your greening and your swelling

On the limb,
Set the slim
And misty twigs a-telling
Of sweet rich floods
Up imbibing roots a-pouring,
To the topmost leaf a-soaring,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, brown buds!

I say, stout heart,
Go out into the weather,
Things of bluffness,
Things of roughness,—
That natheless croon together
O' the earth's new start,
Giving noted sign and reason
Of a coming gentle season,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, stout heart!

—*From "The Months."*

NOVEMBER SONG.

The bright procession of the blossoms hath passed by;
The gold and purple rear
Doth vanishing appear—
Sparse stragglers from th' October flanks
Of Summer's army, where in ranks
They sang to the winds as never carnivals nor symphonies outvie.

Now fields are yellow-hillocked with golden fruits:
The mighty succulent gourd,
With rich, ripe round matured,
Shineth twixt many a saffron shock
Where husks are soon stripped to unfrock
The ear whose ruddy-orange color wi' glow o' the lordly pompion suits.

Then comes mid-month the lovely Indian Summer new,
Whose melting golden haze
Copies the fruity blaze
O' the field, and the bland airs and sky
Retune the heart wi' old singer's cry:
"Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of dew?"

O th' bounty and the beauty,
  The grain and vine!
The harvest is ingathered,
  Corn, oil and wine;
And it hath all been fathered
  With love divine!
The ice-wind will be weathered,
  Where hearth-fires shine
Upon the bounty and beauty,
  The grain and vine!

'Tis a short and speedy way from field to house and home;
  Crops seem to skip to table
  As in a fairy fable,
  And in the winking of an eye
  The flushing pompion in a pie
Sets many a heart a-flame, and to the homestead bringeth
    feet that roam.

Eke fruits and frosts together usher us indoors,
  And fiery hearths foretell
  Still ruddier wintry spell—
  Both a sounding and a shining note
  I' the chimney's hospitable throat,
That crimsons all the mirthful company wi' its bonny
    blazing roars.

Thus back November looks to comfortable sun,
And forward with desires
To frost-becharming fires;
And passeth cider cups about
In loving harvest-merry rout:
And aye this thrice-bedowered season singeth thus when it is done:

O th' bounty and the beauty,
The grain and vine!
The harvest is ingathered,
Corn, oil and wine;
And it hath all been fathered
With love divine!
The ice-wind will be weathered,
Where hearth-fires shine
Upon the bounty and beauty,
The grain and vine!

—*From "The Months."*

ODE TO SEPTEMBER.

September, warm memory of March,
When, as in that month of winter's gruff or gusty cheer
In its last lustiness, and for the second time i' the year,
The day and night are equal round the sphere,
And from the same, then chill, now fiery arch,
The rondure of th' all-heavenly arch,
Blew th' early blasts icy and bluff,
Hearty, athletic, rampant, rough,
And now the cloudy famous gales
That toss the hull and tear the sails
Of hapless ship again that rocks
I' the arms of mighty Equinox,
    And yet in mists like wool
    The sun becalmed burns full.
        And when th' mists rise
        Into the skies,
Then doth the gray-green verdure parch—
    September, I love thee well!
    Thy double majesty to tell
    The sun descendeth golden hot
    On flowery mead or garden spot,
    And thy great tempests, furious,
    Blazing, glorious, perilous,

Fall on the billowy main
Where rolling vessels strain.
Seas go up and seas go down,
And wild September gales,
That thresh the ships like flails,
Take no thought o' men that drown;
Yet ho! for the winds o' the roaring sea,
That shake the air to purity
From one to other pole,
The while beneath them roll
The billows that be shaken too
To keep all clean creation's brew!
And though the mighty features
Of tempests mind not creatures,
'Tis man's great part—no greater other—
To Providence his coming brother,
And learn to weather the fierce storms,
Building ships in sturdier forms;
By every man that lieth drowned below,
Another on the waves shall safely go.
Meanwhile, like ripples skimmed from a Summer sea
And painted into flowers,
September on the land
Flingeth her sunny hours
With warm, prodigal hand,
Transmuting windy scud to bloom o' the lea.
Many a mead shines mellow
With harvest-ready yellow,
And by a brook or nook yet stay

Blossoms lasting e'en from May.
Here is still the Pickerel Weed,
That two months gone began its seed;
The woods are flecked with Yellow Sorrel,
Sabbatia, Cress, Herb Robert, Laurel;
The Spurry Sandwort by the way
Rose-purple at our feet doth lay
In little stars; Impatiens yet
O'erhangs a stream or places wet;
Vervain, Swamp Mallow, Pale Violet,
The Water-Lily, Honeysuckle,
Starwort, Lobelia Cardinal,
The Potentilla's golden eye,
Polygala's purple nestling by,
The Raspberry bush, the Blackberry vine,
And Phytolacca's crimson shine—
These fill the mead, these light the wood
Where eye hath looked or feet have stood
With love, with love, with love, with love,
Knowing that from above
For dear creation's gain
Descend the flower and hurricane!
September, September, September, ho!
Come with thy flowers,
And battling powers—
Thy merry hours
Emblossomed, and furious gales that blow!

—From "The Months."

JANUARY SONG.

And O, if I shall tell, my dear,
If I shall tell the time o' year,
The time that giveth most o' cheer,
    And most 's our own,
    And most by love is known,
    What shall it be?

And O, shall it be Spring, my dear,
Shall it be Spring when first a-clear,
When first it shineth far and near,
    And far doth glow,
    And far the zephyrs blow—
    This shall it be?

And O, shall it be June, my dear,
Shall it be June when roses peer,
When roses blooming bright are here
    With bright gay heads
    And bright and various reds—
    This shall it be?

And O, shall it be Fall, my dear,
Shall it be Fall, when gold the spear,
When gold and brown and ripe the ear,
    And ripe the fruits,
    That ripened Winter suits—
    This shall it be?

Ah no! Not one nor all, my dear,
Not one nor all, but wintry cheer,
The wintry primal glad New Year,
    When glad the heart
    Doth glad each other's part—
    This shall it be.

For O, th' angelic snow, my dear,
Th' angelic snow, and ice how sheer,
The ice that tinkles frosty clear,
    And frosty fills
    With frosted light the sills
    O' the opening year.

And O, the troops of nuns, my dear,
The troops of nuns that white appear
Where white the picket rows up-rear,
    In rows where snow
    The rows doth now o'er-blow,
    And hood them here.

And O, the evergreens, my dear,
The evergreens that mock and fleer,
That mock at storms, and shine in gear
    Of shining ice,
    That shining in a trice
    Berobes them sheer.

And O, the bare-bough trees, my dear,
The bare-bough trees that are not drear,
But are a shape of grace severe,
    Of grace that sky
    More graces with a dry,
    Bright emerald clear.

And O, the yellow flames, my dear,
The yellow flames on hearth that veer,
On hearth domestic where is cheer,
    And where a kiss
    And where all human bliss
    Hath naught to fear.

Then O, how festal fair, my dear,
How festal fair this time o' year,
This time when hearts o' love sincere
    New love employ,
    With love say, Here be joy,—
    "Happy New Year!"

—*From "The Months."*

SONNET.

Full often have I seen a glorious robe
Apparel the earth with perfect endless white,
Making each bush a velvet stud or lobe,
Wi' the same stuff covered as the raiment bright.
Methought th' immaculate splendor were enough;
But when the hours opened the ward o' the west,
There hung th' horizon of soft green and buff,
A spangled girdle for the snowy vest.
O, heart o' me, how hath the dear bard spoken
O' "the light that never was on sea or land?"
Here 's the white-shining seamless robe unbroken,
Which God hath hasped with yon gold emerald band.
If there be light more precious than here seen,
'Tis better light than Love is, as I ween.

—*From "The Months."*

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Behold how fall at Christmastide
    Divers things together:
The heart is warm to love and pray,
    Though 'tis wintry weather.
        Lo, the earth 's a-cold,
        Winds be rough and bold,
        When this story 's told—
        Hearts nor chill nor old!
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly, the holly and bay,
And lovingly, joyously, merrily sing, 'tis Christmas day!

Behold the persons of the poor
    Round the little stranger,
The while the rich bring spice and myrrh
    To the lowly manger.
        Poor and rich are one,
        Strife is hushed and done,
        Peace on earth begun,
        Naught to hate or shun!
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly, the holly and bay,
And joyfully, mirthfully, gratefully sing, 'tis Christmas day!

And lo, the wise together come
    With the rough and wild,
The magi with the silly swains
    Kneel before the child.

'Tis not wit or art,
Nor the dull or smart,
But the child-like heart
Finds the heavenly part!
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly, the holly and bay,
And heartfully, faithfully, praisefully sing, 'tis Christmas day!

Now happy light and happy dark
Mingle over them;
At night 's the birth, but shines the bright
Star of Bethlehem.
Ever hold thy station
In us, bright creation,
Star of Revelation,
Star of sweet Salvation!
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly, the holly and bay,
And happily, blissfully, fervently sing, 'tis Christmas day.

And see, together come the earth
And the heavens lighted,
The angels and their heavenly beams
Flood the plains benighted.
Joy, that high and low
Seek the Christ-child so!
Earth and heaven go,
All the loving know!
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly, the holly and bay,
Forever and ever and ever to sing, 'tis Christmas day!

—*From "The Months."*

EASTER SONGS.

I.

Every year the Spring,
Every year the Fall:
First the Spring when earth doth sing,
Then the Fall when passeth all—
Every, every year.

Every day the morn,
Every day the night:
First the morn when light is born,
Then the night when fadeth sight—
Every, every day.

Every soul hath breath,
Every soul hath death:
First the breath that pleasureth,
Then the death that gathereth—
Every, every soul.

Every life hath love,
Every life hath loss:
First the love that looks above,
Then the loss that sweeps across
Every, every life.

God 's in Spring and Fall,
God 's in morn and night—
Spring and Fall that come to all,
Morn and night the double-bright,—
Always, always God.

God 's in death and breath,
God 's in loss and love:
Death or breath him witnesseth,
Loss and love both point above—
Always, always God.

God 's the all of all,
I 'm his and he 's mine:
If all, what recks what may befall?
If mine, all 's love and light divine:—
Always, always God.

Every love he loves,
And he makes it life—
Life with never end nor stint,
Life that hath th' immortal in 't,—
Every, every love.

Every year the Spring!
Every day the light!
Comes the Spring new life to bring,
Comes the light of Easter-sight,—
Every, every year!
Every, every day!

II.

"Where are they?"
Why, here:
Where should they be, I pray,
My own beloved? Away?
Forever and a day
Heart-near
They walk with me and stay.
"Where are they," indeed!

"But vanished?"
O, yea,
Just from the sight of eyes.
"Tear-blinded?" Well, surprise
Caught me sorrow-wise:
But nay,
Opake are not the skies.
"But vanished," indeed!

"But silent?"
Why, yes,
Just to the sense of ears,
Or when beclogged with fears
I have no soul that hears
Express:
Heaven to their voices clears.
"But silent," indeed!

"Where are they? But vanished?
But silent?" What queries!
Well, well—
Hast thou naught better to do,
Or hast thou nothing in view,
Or is naught given to you
To tell?
Or hath love nothing new?
What queries, indeed!

III.

How simple on its stem a flower
Doth bloom above the dew,
Looking to heaven every hour
With native eyes of blue,
Native unto the skies' own hue!

How simply do the creatures plan
Who spin themselves a grave,
And hide therein a little span,
Then flutter forth full brave,—
Flutter, and gilded pinions wave.

How simple 'tis a man to be,
To live, to love, to think,
Who looks forth from his eyes to see,
And standeth on the brink,
Standeth whence soul soars, ne'er to sink!

O, life is thrice simplicity,
    Plain as the blooming things,
As spinning cocoon-creatures be,
    And simple as new wings,
Simple as soul that prays and sings:

O, life is simple fellowship
    With thing, and man, and beast,
And death is naught, that cannot nip
    What shineth, large or least—
Shineth with one light, west or east:

O, life is earth-wide fellowship,
    And death has naught to say;
Saith naught but it to life doth slip
    As roundeth night to day
Around the rounded world alway.

Wherefore, awake me, orient life,
    Or lull me, occident;
With east or west I have no strife,
    But follow with one bent,
Follow with Easter merriment.

IV.

O blessed Voice of Love and Faith,
That life immortal witnesseth,
And to the waiting spirit saith,
"In my Father's house are many mansions!"

Now Spring doth sing and waters leap;
Earth's times a deathless vigil keep,
And life returns from hidings deep:
"In the Father's house are many mansions!"

My soul, let earth one mansion be;
The heavens then hear that call to thee,
With all the stars in company,
"In the Father's house are many mansions!"

And mansions more for aye have been
Beyond this round of stars serene,
Eternal built in heavens unseen:
"In the Father's house are many mansions!"

Dear Master, Voice of Love and Faith,
Thy word doth live, and in me saith—
And all my spirit answereth—
"In my Father's house are many mansions!"

O blest and dear is mortal breath,
And blest is life and love,—and death,
Because the soul within me saith,
"In my Father's house are many mansions!"

—*From "The Months."*

AFTERWORD.

There 's a chill in the air, a chill and a chill,
And my heart, my heart I can not hold still,
But it shivers aloof, and cower it will,
    In the misty morning gray.

From my heart, my heart, I turn not away,
E'en though with its darkness it darken the day,
But I question, and hearken the things it will say,
    And it tells me the simple truth:

I am weary, it saith, and I miss my youth,
And eke in the world I find little ruth;
I am weary and wish to die, good sooth,
    If God will set the time.

But my heart, my heart, I say, 'tis the prime
Of honor to bide in the ranks, 'tis a crime
To run from thy post in dew or in rime,
    Till thou be mustered out;

And what 'tis a wrong to set thee about
'Tis a wrong to wish, and undevout:
Who wishes to run is himself a rout,
    Though an army hold him in.

I spake, and my whole heart knew its sin,
And lifted its brow, and breathed deep in,
And cried, There is something to do and win,
    Wherever, whenever the same.

If a thousand years betide my name,
Or only this breath, or failure or fame,
One thing is true glory and one is true shame,
    Howbeit I live or die:

The part that is low, or the part that is high,
Is to run from the thing that I ought to stand by,
Or to face either heaven or hell and defy
    Them to draw me or drive or abate.

For God 's in the little and eke in the great,
Nay, naught is a big or a little estate;
Who faceth th' Eterne is nor early nor late;—
    To hasten, or faint, 'tis one ill.

Is there chill in the air, a chill and a chill,
And my heart, my heart I can not hold still?
But mighty it shall be, and glory it will
    I' some noon, and go its way!

O God, my God! I thank thee! I pray!
I bless thee that noon of the night or the day
Is thy noon still—I can not away!
    Here 's home, my home! I stay!

—*From "The Months."*

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